FLASHFEED STUDY GUIDE

Spanish: Health & the Body

Study guide by FlashFeed

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Spanish: Health & the Body: study guide

Latin American Spanish for your body and your health: the parts of the body, saying where it hurts, common illnesses and their false friends, and a visit to the doctor.

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How to use this guide

Take one lesson at a time: read the study guide, then go over any key facts. Where a lesson has a self-test, try it from memory before you check the answer key at the back. Follow the Go deeper links when you want more.

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LESSON 1 OF 1

Lesson 1: Health & The Body

Part 1: Body Parts · Part 2: At the Doctor · Part 3: Common Ailments · Fill the Blank: Body & Health

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Name head, limb and torso body parts, including the stomach and throat.
- Name facial features and internal organs, and recognize la mano as a feminine -o exception.
- Identify core body parts (la cabeza, el pie, la espalda, la garganta) from their descriptions.
- Name doctor's-office words (médico, enfermera, cita, receta) and express pain with me duele and me duelen.
- Name common ailments, and say resfriado or estreñido instead of the ambiguous constipado.

Health & The Body

Health vocabulary is the one corner of Spanish you hope never to need urgently. The grammar is also slightly odd — Spanish describes pain by saying the body part is doing something to you, not that you have something. This lesson covers the anatomy, the doctor's office choreography, and the common ailments, with particular attention to one word that means different things in different countries. If you only remember one item from this lesson, make it that one.

Body Parts

The external map is small and worth knowing cold: **la cabeza** (*head*), **el brazo** (*arm*), **la pierna** (*leg*), **la mano** (*hand*), **el pie** (*foot*), and **la espalda** (*back*). Watch the genders — **la mano** ends in *-o* but is feminine, an irregularity left over from Latin. **El pie** ends in *-e* and is masculine; its plural is **los pies**, which is spelled similarly to **los peces** (*the fish*), though the two are pronounced quite differently.

The face adds four everyday words: **el ojo** (*eye*), **la oreja** (*ear*), **la nariz** (*nose*), and **la boca** (*mouth*). **La oreja** is the outer ear you can see; the inner ear is **el oído**.

Three internal organs make the basic list here: **el estómago** (*stomach*), **la garganta** (*throat*) and **el corazón** (*heart*). The accent on **estómago** is mandatory in writing and shifts the stress; without it the word would be pronounced wrong. Most other internal anatomy waits for a higher level — at A2-B1 the focus is on what hurts and where.

At the Doctor

The grammar pivot in this section is the verb **doler** (*to hurt*), which behaves like **gustar**. You do not *have* a headache in Spanish; the head *hurts you*. The structure is *"Me duele la cabeza"* (literally *"The head hurts me"*) or *"Me duelen los pies"* (plural subject, plural verb). The body part takes a definite article — **la**, **el**, **los**, **las** — not a possessive. *"Me duele mi cabeza"* sounds wrong to a native speaker.

Once symptoms get a name, you make **una cita** (*appointment*) with **el médico** (*doctor*) or see **la enfermera** (*nurse*). The doctor hands you **una receta**, which means *prescription* in this context but *recipe* in the kitchen — same word, two worlds. You take the receta to **la farmacia** (*pharmacy*) to get it filled. An alternative phrasing for symptoms uses **tener**: *"Tengo dolor de estómago"* (*"I have a stomach ache"*) works the same as *"Me duele el estómago."*

Common Ailments

The common-cold spectrum has more vocabulary than English. **La gripa** is the flu — the fever-driven illness (Spain says **la gripe**; **gripa** is the form heard in Mexico and Colombia, where people also often use it for an ordinary cold, so context decides). A simple cold has two common names — **un resfriado** and **un catarro** — and which one you hear more often depends on the speaker, not a clean country-by-country split. **La fiebre** is fever and **la tos** is cough. **Tos** is only the noun; the verb is **toser** (*to cough*), as in *"toso mucho"* (*I cough a lot*).

For general states, **mareado** covers *dizzy*, *lightheaded*, and *seasick* — the verb **marear** literally relates to the sea. **Cansado** is *tired*.

The word that trips up English speakers is **constipado**. It looks like *constipated*, and in parts of Latin America it can mean exactly that, while in Spain it means you have a cold. The Spanish-language academies' *Diccionario de americanismos* records constipation or indigestion as meanings in Paraguay, Uruguay, parts of Argentina and the United States. Mexico's own dictionary lists both a cold and constipation under the verb *constiparse*. Because the meaning depends on the country, skip the word. Say **resfriado** for a cold and **estreñido** for constipated — *"estoy resfriado"*, *"estoy estreñido"* — and no pharmacist has to guess.

Key concepts

la cabeza

- The topmost part of the body, above the neck.
- When you have a headache, Spanish says this part 'hurts you' — 'Me duele la ___.'
- The Spanish word for the head.

la mano

- An external body part found at the end of the arm.
- You have five fingers on each one.
- The Spanish word for the hand — famously feminine even though it ends in -o.

el pie

- An external body part you stand on.
- It ends in -e and is masculine; its plural is spelled similarly to 'los peces' (the fish), though the two don't sound alike.
- The Spanish word for the foot.

la espalda

- An external body part on the basic anatomy map.
- It's the flat surface running down the rear of your torso, behind the chest.
- The Spanish word for the back.

la garganta

- One of the internal parts on the basic list, alongside el estómago and el corazón.
- It's the passage at the front of the neck that gets sore with a cold.
- The Spanish word for the throat.

la receta

- A word from the doctor's office that names a thing, not a person or a place.
- The doctor hands it to you, and you take it to la farmacia to get it filled.
- The Spanish word for a prescription — and, in a kitchen, for a recipe.

Key facts

> **La Mano Breaks the -O Rule**
> Spanish nouns ending in *-o* are almost always masculine — **el brazo**, **el dedo**, **el codo**. **La mano** is the famous holdout, an irregularity inherited from Latin, so it's *la mano derecha*, never *el mano*. Meanwhile **la cabeza**, **la pierna** and **la espalda** end in *-a* and behave exactly as advertised.

> **The Face in Four Words**
> The face runs **el ojo** (*eye*), **la oreja** (*ear*), **la nariz** (*nose*) and **la boca** (*mouth*). Nouns ending in *-z* are usually feminine — **la luz**, **la voz**, **la paz**, **la nariz** — though **el lápiz** and **el pez** refuse to cooperate.

> **The Internal Map, Three Words**
> Most internal anatomy waits for a higher level. **La garganta** (*throat*), **el estómago** (*stomach*) and **el corazón** (*heart*) are the entire internal map here. Mind that accent: **estómago** is stressed es-TÓ-ma-go, and without the mark Spanish spelling rules would push you to say es-to-MA-go.

> **La Cabeza**
> La cabeza means the head in Spanish, distinct from la mano (hand), la pierna (leg), and la espalda (back).

> **La Pierna**
> La pierna is Spanish for the leg. Related body words include el brazo (arm), el pie (foot), and la espalda (back).

Una Cita: Appointment or Date

La cita you book with the doctor is an appointment, but the same word covers a romantic date and a quotation in an essay. Context does all the work. Note the split in the clinic too: **el médico** names the profession (*voy al médico*), while *doctor* and *doctora* are how you address them. The nurse is **la enfermera**.

La Farmacia

In Spanish-speaking countries, la farmacia (the pharmacy) is where you go to get medicine a doctor has prescribed, filling your receta there.

El Médico

El médico means the doctor in Spanish. The nurse is la enfermera, and you make una cita (an appointment) to see the médico.

Constipado: Cold or Constipated?

Constipado looks like *constipated*, and in parts of Latin America it can mean just that. In Spain it means you have a cold. The *Diccionario de americanismos* records constipation or indigestion as meanings in Paraguay, Uruguay, parts of Argentina and the United States. Mexico's own dictionary lists both a cold and constipation under *constiparse*. Because the meaning depends on the country, skip it: say **resfriado** for a cold and **estreñido** for constipated.

Cold or Flu: Resfriado and Gripa

A simple cold has two names in Spanish: **un resfriado** and **un catarro**, and you will hear both. **La gripa** is the flu: fever, aches and that knocked-flat feeling. Spain says **la gripe**; **gripa** is the everyday form in Mexico and Colombia, where people also often use it for an ordinary cold, so context decides.

Mareado Comes From the Sea

Mareado covers *dizzy*, *lightheaded* and *seasick* in a single word — the verb **marear** traces straight back to **el mar** (*the sea*). So *"estoy mareado"* works on a ferry, on a hot bus, or after standing up too fast. **Cansado**, by contrast, just means tired.

La Fiebre

If you have a high temperature, the Spanish word for that symptom is la fiebre. It's distinct from la tos (a cough), la gripa (the flu), and feeling mareado (dizzy).

Tengo Fiebre, Me Duele

Spanish reports symptoms two ways. Conditions you *have* take **tener**: *"Tengo fiebre"*, *"Tengo tos"*, *"Tengo dolor de estómago."* Pain located in a specific part takes **doler**: *"Me duele la garganta."* Both turn up in one breath at the clinic — *"Tengo fiebre y me duele la garganta."*

Receta Becomes the Verb Recetar

La receta (*prescription*) spins off the verb **recetar**, *to prescribe*: *"El médico me recetó un antibiótico."* You then buy **las medicinas** at **la farmacia** — the noun, the verb and the shop all inside one short errand.

> **Estoy Constipado**
> Tell a pharmacist 'estoy constipado' and what they hear depends on the country: in Spain, a cold; in parts of Latin America, constipation. 'Estoy resfriado' says you have a cold and 'estoy estreñido' says you are constipated, so nobody has to guess.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

La cabeza → The head

El brazo → The arm

La pierna → The leg

La espalda → The back

La mano → The hand

El pie → The foot

El estómago → The stomach

La garganta → The throat

El ojo → The eye

La oreja → The ear

La boca → The mouth

La nariz → The nose

El corazón → The heart

El médico → The doctor

La enfermera → The nurse

La cita → The appointment

La receta → The prescription / recipe

La farmacia → The pharmacy / drugstore

La gripa → The flu

La fiebre → The fever

La tos → The cough

Resfriado / Catarro → A cold

Mareado → Dizzy / Sea-sick

Cansado → Tired

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. What does 'la cabeza' mean?

- A The hand
- B The back
- C The leg
- D The head

2. Which Spanish word means 'the leg'?

- A El pie
- B La pierna
- C El brazo
- D La espalda

3. In Spanish, how do you say 'the back' (the body part)?

- A La espalda
- B La cabeza
- C El estómago
- D La garganta

4. 'La garganta' refers to which body part?

- A The arm
- B The foot
- C The throat
- D The stomach

5. You point to your stomach at the doctor. Which word names it?

- A La garganta
- B El estómago
- C La pierna
- D El brazo

6. Nouns ending in -o are usually masculine in Spanish. Which body part is a feminine exception to that rule?

- A Brazo (the arm)
- B Codo (the elbow)
- C Mano (the hand)
- D Dedo (the finger)

7. What does 'el ojo' mean?

- A The eye
- B The ear
- C The mouth
- D The nose

8. Why does 'estómago' carry a written accent on the ó?

- A It doesn't need an accent
- B Because it's a loanword from French
- C To mark it as feminine
- D To keep the stress on that syllable

9. What does 'la boca' mean?

- A The nose
- B The eye
- C The throat
- D The mouth

10. 'El corazón' names which internal organ?

A The stomach
B The throat
C The heart
D The lungs

11. 'El pie' translates to which English word?

A The foot
B The finger
C The hand
D The eye

12. Which statement is TRUE?

A 'La cabeza' means the throat
B 'La cabeza' means the head
C 'La cabeza' means the back
D 'La cabeza' means the foot

13. If your 'espalda' hurts, which part of your body is affected?

A Your stomach
B Your head
C Your throat
D Your back

14. A sore throat would involve which body part in Spanish?

A La garganta
B La nariz
C El estómago
D La boca

15. Which of the following is NOT a correct translation?

A 'La garganta' = the throat
B 'La cabeza' = the head
C 'El pie' = the hand
D 'La espalda' = the back

16. Where do you go to get medicine prescribed by a doctor?

A Al hospital
B A la farmacia
C A la oficina
D A la tienda

17. Who is 'el médico'?

A The patient
B The nurse
C The doctor
D The pharmacist

18. How do you correctly say 'my head hurts' in Spanish?

A Yo duelo la cabeza
B Me duele la cabeza
C Tengo mi cabeza
D Me duele mi cabeza

19. 'Doler' agrees with the body part. Complete: 'Me ___ los pies.'

A duelen
B duele
C duelo
D dolió

20. The doctor gives you 'una receta.' In a medical context, what is it?

A. A recipe for food
B. A pharmacy
C. An appointment
D. A prescription

21. What is 'un resfriado'?

A. A common cold
B. The flu
C. A headache
D. A broken bone

22. 'Constipado' is a word worth remembering, because its meaning changes with the country. Which sentence clearly says 'I have a cold'?

A. Estoy cansado
B. Estoy mareado
C. Estoy resfriado
D. Estoy estreñido

23. Which ailment is 'la gripa'?

A. A cough
B. The flu
C. Dizziness
D. A fever

24. If someone says they feel 'mareado,' how do they feel?

A. Feverish
B. Coughing
C. Tired
D. Dizzy or seasick

25. You have a high temperature. Which Spanish word names that symptom?

A. La gripa
B. La tos
C. La fiebre
D. El mareo

Go deeper

WATCH La Mano 0:29
La mano ends in -o, but it's feminine. It's an irregularity left over from Latin.

WATCH The Head Hurts You 0:28
In Spanish, you don't have a headache. The head hurts you: me duele la cabeza.

WATCH Constipado 0:30
Constipado looks like constipated. In Spain, it means you have a cold.

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Answer key

Lesson 1: Lesson 1: Health & The Body

1. D The head

'La cabeza' is the head. 'La mano' is the hand, 'la pierna' the leg, and 'la espalda' the back.

2. B La pierna

'La pierna' is the leg. 'El brazo' is the arm, 'el pie' the foot, and 'la espalda' the back.

3. A La espalda

'La espalda' is the back. 'La garganta' is the throat, 'el estómago' the stomach, and 'la cabeza' the head.

4. C The throat

'La garganta' is the throat, one of the internal organs in the basic body vocabulary. 'El estómago' is the stomach.

5. B El estómago

'El estómago' is the stomach — note the mandatory written accent. 'La garganta' is the throat.

6. C Mano (the hand)

'La mano' ends in -o yet is feminine — an irregularity left over from Latin. Brazo, codo, and dedo all end in -o and are, as expected, masculine.

7. A The eye

'El ojo' is the eye. 'La oreja' is the ear, 'la nariz' the nose and 'la boca' the mouth.

8. D To keep the stress on that syllable

The accent on estómago is mandatory and fixes the stress on -tó-; without it, Spanish spelling rules would push the stress elsewhere (es-to-MA-go).

9. D The mouth

'La boca' is the mouth. 'La nariz' is the nose, 'la garganta' the throat and 'el ojo' the eye.

10. C The heart

'El corazón' is the heart, one of three internal organs in the basic body vocabulary, along with 'el estómago' (stomach) and 'la garganta' (throat).

11. A The foot

'El pie' is the foot; its plural 'los pies' is spelled similarly to 'los peces' (the fish), though the two are pronounced quite differently. 'La mano' is the hand.

12. B 'La cabeza' means the head

'La cabeza' is the head. The throat is 'la garganta', the back 'la espalda', and the foot 'el pie'.

13. D Your back

'La espalda' is the back. The throat is 'la garganta', the stomach 'el estómago', the head 'la cabeza'.

14. A La garganta

'La garganta' is the throat. 'El estómago' is the stomach, 'la nariz' the nose, and 'la boca' the mouth.

15. C 'El pie' = the hand

'El pie' is the foot, not the hand ('la mano'). The other three pairings are correct.

16. B A la farmacia

The 'farmacia' is where you fulfill a 'receta' for medicine.

17. C The doctor

'El médico' is the doctor. The nurse is 'la enfermera'. You make 'una cita' (appointment) to see the doctor.

18. B Me duele la cabeza

'Doler' works like 'gustar': the head hurts you, and the body part takes a definite article ('la'), not a possessive. 'Me duele mi cabeza' sounds wrong to natives.

19. A duelen

'Los pies' is a plural subject, so the verb is plural: 'Me duelen los pies.' You'd use 'duele' with a singular part like 'la cabeza'.

20. D A prescription

'La receta' means prescription at the doctor (but recipe in the kitchen — same word). You take it to 'la farmacia'; the appointment is 'la cita'.

21. A A common cold

A 'resfriado' is a common cold. 'Gripa' names the flu, though in Mexico and Colombia people also often use it for an ordinary cold.

22. C Estoy resfriado

'Resfriado' means you have a cold, and 'estreñido' means you are constipated. 'Constipado' can mean either, depending on the country, so use the clear words.

23. B The flu

'La gripa' is the flu (Spain says 'la gripe'). In Mexico and Colombia it is also often used for an ordinary cold, which is 'un resfriado' or 'un catarro'; 'la tos' is a cough and 'la fiebre' fever.

24. D Dizzy or seasick

'Mareado' covers dizzy, lightheaded, and seasick (the verb 'marear' relates to the sea). 'Cansado' means tired.

25. C La fiebre

'La fiebre' is fever. 'La tos' is a cough, 'la gripa' the flu, and 'mareo/mareado' relates to dizziness.

Sources

Lesson sources: SpanishDict: Body Parts in Spanish

- SpanishDict: Body Parts in Spanish — https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/body-parts-in-spanish
- ASALE: Diccionario de americanismos, constipado — https://www.asale.org/damer/constipado

Useful links

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- This pack in the app: flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/spanish-health-body
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